

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES - Guidelines for Unit Assessment Boards

Extenuating Circumstances are circumstances relating to a student's health and /or personal life which are of a sufficiently serious nature to result in her or his being unable to attend, complete, or submit an assessment on time. The Regulations relating to Extenuating Circumstances and the Criteria by which they will be judged are reproduced in the current Examination and Assessment Regulations.

The University of Portsmouth operates a "fit to sit" policy. If a student attends an examination or hands a piece of coursework in on time, they are claiming that they were fit to do so and can not submit an extenuating circumstances form – all claims where they have attended or submitted the assessment on time will be rejected.

Students cannot submit extenuating circumstances for deferred First Attempt Assessments or Second Attempt Assessments. They can only submit extenuating circumstances for the first attempt in an academic year. There should be no cases of extenuating circumstances to consider for the Boards to consider Second Attempt Assessment Unit Assessment and Deferred First Attempt Assessments.

Problems with course management that have affected student performance, either individually as part of a group, should be remedied as a result of students following the student complaints procedure. The Department may also anticipate the effect of such problem and through the Head of Department, acting in consultation with the Academic Registrar, regard these as generic extenuating circumstances, which may require some proposed remedy. These processes may result in the Unit Assessment Board being asked to endorse or consider proposed remedies.

Unit Assessment Boards will be informed by Extenuating Circumstances Officers whether a student has valid extenuating circumstances, and if so, which assessment artefacts have not been completed, attended or submitted on time. Unit Assessment Boards will not be informed of what the extenuating circumstances are, nor should they spend time discussing them.

The UAB may make one of four possible decisions with regard to valid extenuating circumstances.

Firstly, where the student has missed an examination, it will record a decision of Deferred First Attempt Assessment and offer the student the opportunity to complete a Deferred First Attempt Assessment in the affected assessment artefact(s). Dates should be set for the completion of Deferred First Attempt Assessment but these should be sensitive to the student's circumstances bearing in mind students cannot trail units into the next year. The Chair of the Board shall ensure written communication takes place with the student giving details of the Deferred First Attempt Assessment and its timing.

Secondly, where a student has had an assessment penalty imposed in relation to an assessment artefact by virtue of late submission and also has a valid extenuating circumstance in relation to that assessment artefact, then the penalty will be cancelled and the assessment artefact given the full mark it justifies on its merits alone provided the work was submitted within twenty working days of the due date of submission. Students can not submit a further extenuating circumstances claim within this period to extend the time further. If this has not been done, the Unit Assessment Board must do it. The UAB, exceptionally, may lift penalties for late submission in the absence of any student claim or Extenuating Circumstances Officer decision. If it does this, the Chair of the UAB must cause the minutes of the meeting to record clearly the grounds for exercising such discretion. The UAB cannot waive, under any circumstance, an assessment penalty where the Extenuating

Circumstances Officer has determined that a student's claim is invalid. Where the coursework has not been received because the student is still within the time period for submitting it late and attracting the full marks, the Unit Assessment Board shall record a decision of PENDING and will delegate the decision to Chairs Action following the UAB. The UAB cannot waive penalties imposed in accordance with the University Disciplinary Procedures.

Thirdly, the UAB may extrapolate an overall mark in cases where, in its academic judgement, there is sufficient evidence, from at least two other completed and unaffected assessment artefacts contributing to the final mark of the unit, that the learning outcomes of the unit have been met. An example would be where there are a number of small assessments progressively building on a competence and achievement of the final tested competence demonstrates competence in the earlier assessments. In such a case, the UAB might judge that the student had successfully demonstrated the learning outcomes of the unit and would extrapolate a mark by discounting the affected assessment and re-calculating an overall mark by re-weighting the unaffected assessment artefacts accordingly.

Chairs should make sure members of the UAB understand that, under the University's extenuating circumstance policy, a student with a valid extenuating circumstance, has a right to another attempt at the affected examination provided that they can pass the unit within the Second Attempt Assessment Period.

All decisions taken by a Unit Assessment Board in respect of valid extenuating circumstances made known to it must be recorded in the minutes, together with a reason for the decision reached.

George Allison, Assistant Registrar, Assessments & Student Regulations
March 2015

Links to Useful Documents

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Unit Assessment Boards](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Criteria](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Students](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Boards of Examiners](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Guidance for Extenuating Circumstances Officers](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances – Procedures](#)

[Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies](#)

[Extenuating Circumstances](#)

[Coursework](#)

[Examinations](#)

[Unit Assessment Boards](#)